TL 1032

Agir pour Timor

We are a new French solidarity group, which formed itself shortly before the Pope's visit to East Timor in last October. Recently we took a legal status, to be able to benefit from subventions, postage facilities, etc.

At the moment we are a small group of 8 persons. So far our action has been mainly one of information: we staged a press conference a few days before the Pope's visit, and then a demonstration on the 12th of October. The press conference had an attendance of 15-20 journalists and the demonstration was followed by 25 people. By the end of December, we set an information conference, followed by a debate. At this conference we showed Rui Araújo's film 'Timor? Timur?' (for which we made a French-dubbed version) and had the participation of a historian who had made a research dissertation on East Timor. The attendance was of about 50 persons. We also co-signed the joint statement on East Timor on 7th December, which was spread at the occasion of this conference. At the beginning of February, we had another conference in Les Mureaux, a small town west of Paris, in the framework of a 'knowledge of Portugal' initiative held by the municipality. Here again, the attendance was of about 50 people. Finally, we are organising a (public) informal evening with Jill Jolliffe on next Wednesday (March 14th), with a dinner in a Portuguese restaurant followed by a meeting in an Australian gallery-bookshop.

One of us (Antonio Dias) helped realising and completing the East Timor part of an exhibition on the former, Kurdistan and South Africa which was held in Beauvais (north of Paris) in December-January. Posters for this exhibition were used at Les Mureaux' conference. We also realised an interview of an official from the French foreign ministry at the end of January (see joint copy).

One of our aims is to extend the support and awareness by publicising the issue. One way of doing this is to get support from the Portuguese community in France (the largest in the world outside Portugal) and exploit its associative network, which is very rich. This is made possible because several of us are Portuguese and involved in this associative network. We also enjoy the support of the House of Portugal in Paris, which has helped us financially and by lending us a room (with projection facilities) for our first information conference. Another way is to get good contacts with other NGO's and try and have them involved in supporting East Timor.

A third way of publicising the issue is to attract support from *artists*. So far we have received such a support via the House of Portugal: a chamber music concert was staged there by Portuguese music students on December 8th, in support of East Timor. At the occasion of our conference at the end of December, one painter donated a

painting and two others agreed to donate half of sales products for some of their paintings. One singer has proposed to stage a concert and others (among whom the pianist Maria João Pires) are being approached. We also plan to approach other artists, like popular singers and people involved in show business. The idea is that, if East Timor is taken up by them, the media will suddenly be more inclined to speak about it. We also have a project for an international or European painting exhibition, which could involve co-ordination among the various groups (to be reported on in the agenda). Here, besides advertisement, the idea is also that with some luck it could be a very efficient way to raise money. Finally, we shall be trying to participate into events organised by more well-known NGOs (like SOS-Racisme for example).

We are few in number and as most people many of us have heavy duties. As a consequence, our rhythm of work is quite slow. Yet we hope to improve this in the future.